The Master's Word

PART II

Letter G

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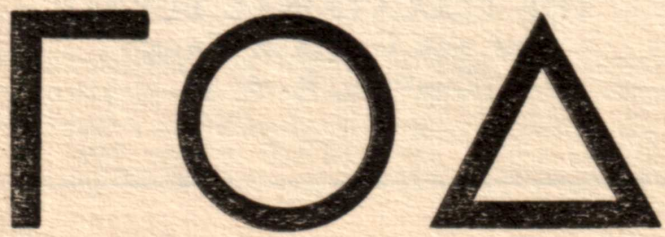
On pages 22-28 Brother Cockburn calls attention to the fact that in several ancient languages besides Greek, the letter G was in the form of a square, but he fails to note that the Latin clubfooted G is an outgrowth of superimposing the circle of Divine Love on the square of moral rectitude. Thus in the well-known Masonic symbol, the G has the same significance as the square and compass.

Then, too, the three Geometrical and Masonic figures of the square, the circle and the triangle, in many ways and forms all point to man's progress in finding the Master's Word, which is the knowledge of God



THE MASTER'S WORD

PART II

LETTER G

By C. C. HUNT, P G. H. P.

Mackey in his Encyclopedia (Clegg Revision) gives the following explanation of the letter "G":

G. In the Hebrew, represented by ג. The seventh letter of the English, Latin, and Romanic alphabets. In the Greek and many other alphabets it is the third in place; in the Russian, Wallachian, and some others, it is the fourth; in the Arabic the fifth, and in the Ethiopian the twentieth. In Hebrew it is called **Gheé-mel,** is of the numerical value of three, and its signification is **camel.** It is associated with the third sacred name of God, in Hebrew, **Ghadol,** or in Latin **magnus,** the **Mighty.** In Freemasonry it is given as the initial of the word God. The Masonic use of the letter tends to the belief of a modern form in the ceremony of the Fellow Craft Degree (see G. O. D.). As in all Roman Catholic and in many Protestant churches the cross, engraved or sculptured in some prominent position, will be found as the expressive symbol of Christianity, so in every Masonic Lodge a letter G may be seen in the East, either painted on the wall or sculptured in wood or metal, and suspended over the Master's chair. This is, in fact, if not the most prominent, certainly the most familiar, of all the symbols of Freemasonry. It is the

one to which the poet, Brother Robert Burns, alluded in those well-known and often-quoted lines, in which he speaks of

"...that hieroglyphic bright
Which none but Craftsmen ever saw;"

that is to say, ever saw understandingly—ever saw, knowing at the same time what it meant.

There is an uncertainty as to the exact time when this symbol was first introduced into Speculative Masonry. It was not derived, in its present form, from the Operative Masons of the Middle Ages, who bestowed upon Freemasonry so much of its symbolism, for it is not found among the architectural decorations of the old cathedrals. Doctor Oliver says it was in the old lectures; but this is an uncertain expression. From Prichard's **Masonry Dissected,** which was published in 1730, it would seem that the symbol was not in use at that date. But it may have been omitted. If **Tubal Kain,** which was published in 1767, is, as it purported to be, identical with Prichard's purpose, the question is settled; for it contains the lecture on the letter G, to which reference will directly be made.

However, it is certain that the symbol was well known and recognized in 1766, and some few years before. The book entitled **Solomon in all his Glory,** the first edition of which appeared in that year, and which is a translation of **Le Macon démasqué,** contains the reference to and the explanation of the symbol. The work contains abundant internal evidence that it is a translation, and hence the

symbol may, like some others of the system subsequent to 1717, have been first introduced on the Continent, and then returned in the translation, all of which would indicate a date some years prior to 1776 for the time of its adoption.

In the ritual contained in **Tubal Kain** (Page 18), or, if that be only a reprint, in **Masonry Dissected,** that is to say, in 1768 or in 1730, there is a test which is called **The Repeating the Letter G,** and which Doctor Oliver gives in his **Landmarks** (i,454) as a part of the old lectures. It is doggerel verse, and in the form of a catechism between an examiner and a respondent, a form greatly affected in those old lectures, and is as follows, the **Resp.** meaning **Response,** and the **Ex., Examiner:**

Resp.—In the Midst of Solomon's
Temple there stands a G,
A letter for all to read and see;
But few there be that understand
What means the letter G.

Ex.—My friend, if you pretend to
be
Of this Fraternity,
You can forthwith and rightly tell
What means that letter G.

Resp.—By sciences are brought
about,
Bodies of various kinds,
Which do appear to perfect sight;
But none but males shall know
my mind.

Ex.—The Right shall—

Resp.—If Worshipful.

Ex.—Both Right and Worshipful I
am;

To hail you I have command,
That you forthwith let me know,
As I you may understand.

Resp.—By letters four and science five,
This G aright doth stand,
In a due art and proportion;
You have your answer, Friend.

And now as to the signification of the symbol. We may say, in the first place, that the explanation is by no means, and never has been, esoteric. As the symbol itself has always been exposed to public view, forming, as it does, a prominent part of the furniture of a Lodge, to be seen by everyone, so our Masonic authors from the earliest times, have not hesitated to write, openly and in the plainest language, of its signification. The fact is, that the secret instruction in reference to this symbol relates not to the knowledge of the symbol itself, but to the mode in which, and the object for which that knowledge has been obtained.

Hutchinson, who wrote as early as 1776, says, in his **Spirit of Masonry** (Lecture viii):

> It is now incumbent on me to demonstrate to you the great signification of the letter G, wherewith Lodges and the medals of Masons are ornamented. To apply its signification to the name of God only is depriving it of part of its Masonic import; although I have already shown that the symbols used in Lodges are expressive of the Divinity's being the great object of Masonry, as Architect of the world.

This significant letter denotes **Geometry**, which, to artificers, is the science by which all their labours are calculated and formed; and to Masons, contains the determination, definition, and proof of the order, beauty, and wonderful wisdom of the power of God in His creation.

Again, Dr. Frederick Dalcho, a distinguished Freemason of South Carolina, in one of his **Orations**, delivered and published in 1801, uses the following language (page 27):

> The **letter G**, which ornaments the Master's Lodge, is not only expressive of the name of the Grand Architect of the Universe, but also denotes the science of Geometry, so necessary to artists. But the adoption of it by Masons implies no more than their respect for those inventions which demonstrate to the world the power, the wisdom, and the beneficence of the Almighty Builder in the works of the creation.

Lastly, Doctor Oliver has said, in his **Golden Remains of the Early Masonic Writers**, that "the term G. A. O. T. U. is used among Masons for this great and glorious Being, designated by the letter G, that it may be applied by every brother to the object of his adoration."

More quotations are unnecessary to show that from the earliest times, since the adoption of the letter as a symbol, its explanation has not been deemed an esoteric or secret part of the ritual. No Masonic writer has hesitated openly to give an explanation of its meaning. The mode in which, and the purpose for which,

that explanation was obtained are the only hidden things about the symbol.

It is to be regretted that the letter G, as a symbol, was ever admitted into the Masonic system. The use of it as an initial would necessarily confine it to the English language and to modern times. It wants therefore, as a symbol, the necessary characteristics of both universality and antiquity. The Greek letter **gamma** is said to have been venerated by the Pythagoreans because it was the initial of γεωμετρία or **Geometry.** But this veneration couldn't have been shared by other nations whose alphabet had no **gamma,** and where the word **geometry** was entirely different.

There can be no doubt that the letter G is a very modern symbol, not belonging to any old system anterior to the origin of the English language. It is, in fact, a corruption of the old Hebrew Cabalistic symbol, the letter **yod,** by which the sacred name of God—in fact, the most sacred name, the **Tetragrammaton**—is expressed. This letter **yod** is the initial letter of the word J H V H, or **Jehovah,** and is constantly to be met with among Hebrew writers, as the abbreviation or symbol of that most holy name, which, indeed, was never written at length. Now, as G is in like manner the initial of **God,** the English equivalent of the Hebrew Jehovah, the letter has been adopted as a symbol intended to supply to modern Lodges the place of the Hebrew symbol. First adopted by the English ceremony makers, it has without remark, been transferred to the Freemasonry of the Continent, and it is to

be found as a symbol in all the systems of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and every other country where Freemasonry has been introduced; although in Germany only can it serve, as it does in England, for an intelligent symbol.

The letter G then has in Freemasonry the same force and signification that the letter **yod** had among the Cabalists. It is only a symbol of the Hebrew letter, and, as that is a symbol of God, the letter G is only a symbol of a symbol. As for its reference to geometry, Kloss, the German Masonic historian, says that the old Operative Masons referred the entire science of geometry to the art of building, which gave to the modern English Freemasons occasion to embrace the whole system of Freemasonry under the head of Geometry, and hence the symbol of that science, as well as of God, was adopted for the purpose of giving elevation to the Fellow Craft's Degree.

Indeed, the symbol, made sacred by its reference to the Grand Geometrician of the universe, was well worthy to be applied to that science which has, from the remotest times, been deemed synonymous with Freemasonry.

Criticism Applies Only to English Alphabet.

Mackey's criticisms of the Masonic use of the letter G apply only to the English form of this letter. In Greek it is the third letter and is in the form of a square, (Γ) In the ancient He-

brew characters it was also in the form of a square. In Hebrew also it is the initial of one of the names of God. Pythagoras used it in the Greek form as a symbol of the four lettered name of God.

Mackey says "it was not derived, in its present form, from the Operative Masons of the Middle Ages." That may be true as to its "present form" (G) but in the form of a square (⌐) it was used by our Operative brethren and in that form also it represented Geometry. When our ancient brethren looked at the emblem they saw, not the English "G" but the square "⌐", the most revered emblem of the Craft. With this explanation does not the ancient poem take on new meaning:

> "By letters four and science five,
> This ⌐ aright doth stand."?

How then did Pythagoras make this the symbol of the four lettered name J H V H which he is said to have learned in Egypt? We must remember that Pythagoras considered Geometry, of which to him ⌐ was the initial letter, the most important of sciences and a symbol of God Himself. He said God was always Geometrizing. The initial of Geometry being in the form of an instrumental square was a symbol of the Geometrical square, which has four sides. The

number four, called the first square number, was therefore represented by the square. According to Plutarch "the number four is a square," and Philo Judaeus says "four is the most ancient of all square numbers, it is found to exist in right angles as the figure of a square in Geometry shows, and four is the first number, which is a square, being equal in all sides, the measure of justice and equality."

The Significance of the Square.

What, then, (says Brother John A. Cookburn, A. Q. C. Vol. 10, p. 40) could be more appropriate than the representation of the Tetractys or the Tetragrammaton by the square letter gamma? And to what letter other than that bearing the form of the square could the attention of the Craftsman about to receive his wages be with equal propriety directed? The square is one of the working tools of a fellow-craft and is the emblem of that just relation between man and man which entitled the workman relying on the honesty of his work and on the integrity of his employer, to claim without scruple and without diffidence the due reward of his labour.

In short, the gamma or the square falls into its place in the mosiac of Masonry as readily as the modern G. refuses to be assimilated, and this harmony goes far to establish the antiquity of our ritual; for, if the text is obscure with the letter G but becomes luminous with the gamma, there is proof that the ritual must have been

settled before the disappearance of the ancient and the introduction of the modern letter.

The fifth science was geometry which explains the G or ⌜ in its operative aspect, and the letters four, or tetragrammaton, would elucidate its other, or symbolic, meaning.

Is it not just possible that the form in which the letter G formerly appeared in the Lodge may have been that of the Swastika, , one of the most frequent and sacred of figures in both Eastern and Western Symbolism, whose absence from modern Craft Masonry is a matter of surprise? The Swastika is composed of four gammas combined and was known among old time craftsmen as the tetragammaton.

It is impossible to avoid a feeling of regret that the beautiful symbolism of the square has been marred by the usurpation of the letter G in the place of the gamma, and it appears to be a question worthy of consideration whether it would not be well to show our respect for the ancient landmarks by restoring to the sacred symbol its original form.

As Brother J. L. Davidge says in the London Freemason of Oct. 16th, 1920, (page 193):

Just as the mediaeval Masons feared to pronounce in the presence of strangers the symbol of the Almighty, and concealed it under the letter "G"—in mediaeval Greek a square, so we find that amongst the Hebrews that awful name of Divine majesty might never be uttered by the common people, and even the Jew of today deems the

sacred name so holy that it is unlawful to pronounce it.

In English the equivalent of the Hebrew word of four letters represented by the square, and consequently by the letter "G", is Jehovah, the consonants being J H V H, pronounced Yod Heh Vau Heh, from which Jehovah is derived, the ineffable name of the Supreme Being, belief in whom is the foundation and support of Freemasonry. In the Old Testament the word is always translated Lord.

The Kabalah—the esoteric book of Israel—is full of J H V H, the four lettered name, or Tetragrammaton. But he is a philosophic conception, the synthesis or aggregate of a series of divine qualities, grouped in the symbol of a divine tetrad on a plane conceivable only by man's highest spiritual vision derived from the verb "to be", and literally "what was, and is, and is to come," the Name implies self-existence, and is not in any sense applied to any created being. He is that which the Greek philosophers called the Logos, the Verbum of the Divine Thought, the Root of Manifested Wisdom. This is the esoteric original of the Yahweh of the esoteric books, and it is He whom we find reflected as the nation's patron in the books of the Old Testament. No fewer than 6,823 times in the Old Testament the word Yahweh occurs. The idea of a plurality is conveyed by the word Elohim—the plural of Majesty or dignity, akin to the royal "We"—"Let us make men in our image."

Not only is the Ineffable Name never pronounced, its true sound has

for many centuries been lost to the Jews, and has never been known to the Christians; its real vowels ceased to be spoken before the vowel points were introduced. Brother A. E. Waite informs us that there are no Hebrew works with vowel points earlier than the tenth century. Though Yahweh is the form given by Wellhausen and his school of higher critics, it appears, judging from the cuneiform tablets cited by Col. Condor in his "Critics and the Law" (p. 34) that Yahu would appear to be nearer its correct rendering. This view is supported by the fact that the Gnostics of the second century wrote it in Greek letters as I A O. Diodorus states that amongst the Jews they relate that Moses called the God I A O, and it is claimed on the authority of the Bible itself that before his initiation by Jethro, his father-in-law, Moses had never known the word Iaho. In the esoteric philosophy of the East the word is connected with the secret and unpronounceable word, Oeaohoo, "The word that is no word," a Senzar word more ancient than Sanskrit and associated with the most archaic doctrine—Oi-a-hoo, if we attempted to pronounce it. The primaeval mystic name of the One, the Supreme Energy which differentiates into the septenary Hierarchy of Divine Powers, the Root from which all proceeds, the ever-acting Cause, the Darkness and the Boundless, whose symbol is a circle—this is Oi-a-hoo. In the cosmo-philosophy of the Tibetan pundits the unpronounceable word is related to a whirlwind or vortex, the first manifestation of the

Divine Energy. In algebraical formula it is the letter x, in Herbert Spencer's terminology the Unknowable.

The Kabalistic doctrine relates the sacred letters, Yod, Heh, Vau, Heh, to the symbolical creatures—man, lion, ox, eagle—which in Ezekiel's vision by the River Chebar and in the Apocalypse of St. John supported the Throne of Jehovah. They typify the four Maharajahs of the Hindu cosmogony, the four quarters of the Chinese, and the same square symbol figures in the sacred lore of the North American Indians, in Java and Africa, and in the eschatology of the Egyptians.

The Tetragrammaton of the Hebrew.

In the Hebrew system the Tetragrammaton is thus related to Jehovah, Yod to the head, Heh to the arms, Vau to the body, and the final Heh to the lower limbs (Zohar II, 42a). Man being the copy of God on the earth, the human quaternary reflects these aspects—that is to say, the lower quaternary consisting of the dense body, the vital principle, the desires and the mentality. The higher man is figured in a triangle—the will, wisdom, and intellect. The square and the triangle together represent the whole nature of man in every school of esoteric philosophy, Hebrew or Egyptian, Hindu or Rosicrucian, the sevenfold reflection in man of the septenary differentiation of the One—the Logos seated on the Throne and the seven glorious Spirits before the Throne. The septenary symbol is holy only in its abstract synthesis, as we find it in the basal idea of man's con-

stitution common to all the occult schools. A mystery, truly, and one of the profoundest problems of metaphysics.

Even deeper we might pursue the sacred Word, but it is sufficiently obvious that the letter "G" stands not only for "God," but is a "blind" for that most sacred and unutterable Name of the Unknown and incomprehensible Source, Increate and Unmanifest, in whose presence we can but bow our heads in awe and silence. "According to the theology of Orpheus," says Thomas Taylor, translator of the Greek philosophers, "all things originate from an immense principle, to which, through the imbecility and poverty of human conception, we give a name, though it is perfectly ineffable, and in the reverential language of the Egyptian is a thrice unknown Darkness, in contemplation of which all knowledge is refunded into ignorance."

The Letter G Not Corruption of Hebrew Symbol.

We, therefore, think Mackey erred in calling the letter G "a corruption of the old Hebrew Cabalistic symbol," the Hebrew letter "yod," for although the "yod" is the Hebrew initial of the four lettered name, the square (⌐) was more significant to the Geometrician and the Craftsman. Then, too, the yod was not the initial of the Hebrew word for God, but of His Name which is the same in both Hebrew and

English, for the yod corresponds to our "J" though pronounced like our "Y". Mackey says God is "the English equivalent of the Hebrew Jehovah," but this is not true. The Hebrew equivalent of "God" is "El." Jehovah is the name of both "God" and "El."

Neither the Hebrew yod nor the English "G" stands for both "letters four and science five." The yod does not stand for "science five" (Geometry) and "G" does not stand for "letters four" (J H V H), but Pythagoras and our ancient brethren, believed that the letter ⌐ did stand for both as explained above.

It is significant, also, that ⌐ is the initial of the Greek "gnomen," meaning "knowledge." It also means square, and is the "one great symbol of the perfection of the Creator."

"Letters Four"

Bro. Thomas I. Ballentine presented a very instructive paper on this subject to the Masonic lodges of Peoria, Ill., some years ago (See American Tyler, Nov. 1, 1903, p. 180) in which he said:

The sacred lotus of the Nile has four leaves in many ancient sculptured representations, and the awe with which it was regarded is but a time-

the letters Y. H. V. H. in the text, stained manifestation of the same tradition which attributed good luck to the finding of a four-leaved clover stem.

There are myriad manifestations of the nmber four in the mysticism of primitive man, and the reverence of "our ancient friend and brother, the great Pythagoras," for the Tetragrammaton, or four-letter name of the Deity, is but one phase of the universal relation of arithmetic to occultism, philosophy and religious belief. The Pythagorean tenet of the Tetragrammaton touches the core of a great literary and religious, no less than a cardinal, metaphysical and philosophic truth.

I recollect that years ago, when reading Hebrew literature in an elementary way with Dr. William Stern, a Jewish rabbi of scholarly attainments, I was much struck with the solemnity of my instructor in pronouncing the word Adonah or God. Literally translated this word means Lord or Master, and in some places in the Hebrew scriptures, which we were then studying, the letters forming it were such as would phonetically justify the pronunciation Adonah. But in other passages I observed with surprise that the word so uttered was spelled Y. H. V. H., and these consonants with the vowels which enter into the composition of the word Adonah naturally suggest the pronunciation Yahovah, or Jehovah, the initial Y being sometimes considered an equivalent of J in the original tongue. Yet, whenever we come to

my tutor invariably pronounced the word exactly as if it was spelled A. D. O. N. A. H., and not Y. H. V. H. at all. There were no vowels in the book, for the Hebrew manuscripts contain none, and the reader is expected to furnish the proper vowels out of the storehouse of his knowledge of the language. It was therefore astonishing to me that the pious old man should so solemnly and deliberately invest one set of consonants with the pronunciation which manifestly belongs to another and entirely different set.

Rabbi's Explanation of Sacred Symbol.

On asking the rabbi why he did so, my venerable instructor became very grave, and informed me that the symbols Y. H. V. H. formed in outline the incommunicable, unspeakable four-letter name of Almighty God, and it did not become him or any other human beings to attempt to invest them with their real sound. He quoted the commandment which declared "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain," and said that the ineffable name of the Deity was never pronounced by the ancient Hebrews, not even the priesthood, save once a year only, on the Great Day of Atonement, when the High Priest passed behind the veil and entered the Sanctum Sanctorum, the Holy of Holies or secret chamber of the tabernacle, that being the day on which the sins of the people were laid upon the scape goat, which was then

loosed and driven forth into the wilderness. (Lev. 23).

I was very much awed by the sincerity and earnestness of my learned friend, who reminded me that when God appeared to Manoah and his wife the parents of Samson, he assumed the form of an angel and told them that his name was secret.

Once a year only, and by one man alone was the true name of God uttered among the Hebrews for generations, and in order that the transcendent secret might not be lost the High Priest pronounced it in the ear of his successor in the manner and form in which he himself had received it, in low and awe smitten breath.

It was the unshaken conviction of Rabbi Stern, as of all devout Hebrews of the old school, that there is an inscrutable, essential connection between the name in which the essence of God is expressed and the fundamentals of creation which are geometrical, and the fundamentals of religion which are metaphysical.

My patient instructor informed me further, with sorrowful pathos in his voice, that unhappily for his people the link between Heaven and earth has been broken. The real masoretic points, or vowels properly required to fill out and complete the awful name of the Most High God, have disappeared from Hebraism. They are unknown to the priesthood of this day and age, and the tradition is that the Jewish hierarchy lost all but the four written consonants during the dark days of the Babylonish captivity. The loss of the word was to Dr. Stern the

crowning sin of Israel, the cause of the dispersion of the tribes, destruction of Jerusalem, and demolition of the temple. Not until the word is found again did he look for the reunion and re-edification which means to him and his people the coming of the Redeemer.

These four letters, Y. H. V. H., constitute that to which Brother Cockburn alludes in writing of the reverence of the Pythagoreans for the Tetragammaton, and the substitute word Adonah is the word adopted by the Jewish rabbis until future generations shall find out the right. The term Tetregammaton is Greek, and simply means a word of four letters. In the history of literature, mysticism and religion the four letters to which it has reference stand out as symbolizing that great and awful name communicated by God Himself to Moses amid the thunders of Mt. Sinai, the name which in an earlier day the patriarch Enoch is traditionally said to have engraved upon a triangular plate of gold and deposited in the bowels of the earth, the name which the Redeemer himself is believed to have pronounced in his agony on the cross, but which those who heard it did not comprehend.

At the time, brethren, at which this information was communicated to me I was not a Mason, nor yet was my instructor one of the craft. Neither of us were students of the cabalistic lore of the Orient; but he was a Hebrew, familiar with the religious literature of his race, and he explained to me as fully as he could the importance of

the four-lettered name of God, the consonants of which alone have been preserved, the vowels and consequently the proper pronunciation having seemingly passed forever beyond the ken of priests and Levites.

Universal Reverence for Lost Word

The letter "G," viewed in relation to this deep historic and religious mystery is manifestly of much more importance as a lodge emblem than most of us appear to realize, for it should be borne in mind that the tradition of the lost word is not confined to the Jews alone. The reverence of the Pythagoreans, who were Greeks, for the Tetragammaton is an evidence of this, and as a matter of fact the same tradition, with varying local modifications only, appears in pagan system almost without number or geographical limitation.

Brother Cockburn directs us to an interesting fact in intimating that in the days of the original temple builders the letter "G" was in the form of a square. The gimel, the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the alphabet of ante-captivity days, was unquestionably so. It maintained the same form moreover in the Samaritan, Phoenician, and, as the gamma, in the older Greek tongues*.

After calling attention to many relics of antiquity which seem to have a Masonic significance especially regarding the swastika; he concludes:

These are facts which it may not be possible to explain, but they are of manifest interest in view of the genetic

*See note on page 2.

relationship between the modern letter "G," its anti-type, the square, its significance as suggesting the hidden name of God, its mystic connection with the number four and the swastika. Obscure as they are, they serve a useful purpose, and no thoughtful person, especially no Mason, should slight them because of that dark veil in which their emblematic lineage is shrouded. Even the simple doctrine of Christ, which is universal brotherhood, the tie of Masonry, is imbedded in the deep philosophy of the Logos, or Divine Word, God Incarnate, taught in the writings of the mystic St. John, and dimly forshadowed in the Logos of Plato, and the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Apocrypha. Christianity has its square in the form of the Cross of Calvary; its Tetragrammaton for the initials thereon were four in number, and the letters I. N. R. I. are neither more nor less, in the exalted civilization of today, than the letters Y. H. V. H. were to those Israelites who wrought in the Phoenician quarries with Hiram, the Widow's Son, and Hiram of Tyre in the service of King Solomon.

We may not be able to fully develop this historic relationship of any one of the ancient landmarks of the craft, but the lesson taught in Brother Cockburn's Letter is sufficient to at least reveal the incalculable depth and breadth of the symbolic possibilities which cling to the letter "G" in its original and modern Masonic significance. That a restoration of the letter to its original form as the square is worthy the consideration of the fra-

ternity is doubtless true, but even this change, were it made tomorrow, would not unlock the secrets of the ages, nor lay bare the treasures of the hidden wisdom concealed in the divine economy of the Grand Architect of the Universe. "Tools and implements of architecture, symbols most expressive," are indeed profitably employed to "imprint upon the memory wise and serious truths;" but, despite the yeoman service of "attentive ear, instructive tongue and faithful breast," there is much that must ever remain a mystery to us here, and until the clouded symbolism of earth is illumined in the divine light of that celestial lodge above, where all mists are swept away, and all vanish in a full and absolute knowledge of the truth.

It may not have any significance in this connection, but it is an interesting co-incidence at least, that the three letters G O D are the initials of the three Hebrew words Gomer, Oz, and Dabar, meaning respectively Beauty, Strength and Wisdom.

The Square—The Basis of Masonry

Brother John A. Cockburn says:

The Square is the basis alike of speculative and operative Masonry. It is the symbol of rectitude in the moral world, as it is the test of rectangularity in the physical world. Both artisans and moralists use the same adjective to denote work or conduct which complies with the criterion of the square. In each case it is said to be true. A similar nomenclature has

been employed throughout the ages. Thousands of years ago the square was regarded as the standard and symbol of perfection. All powers, spiritual and physical, were supposed to be contained in it. Indeed, "The Square" was sometimes used as a designation of the Almighty.

To the Mason, a knowledge of the square in all its bearings was essential. His skill consisted largely in his ability to form a perfect right angle in any desired position, and the art of doing this was jealously guarded as a secret. In view of the ancient virtue and high dignity of the square, it may well be asked what other form in geometry or Masonry can be said to have a higher or even an equal claim to the designation of the "Sacred Symbol"? It seems strange that the idea of placing any symbol above the square should ever have been entertained by Masons. **Ex hypothesi**, the square, and no other, ought to be the Sacred Symbol; and that it is so will, I think, appear evident if we study the ritual.

Fortunately, for freedom of inquiry, the whole field of investigation has been laid open, and the usual restrictions on the discussion in print of Masonic matters have been removed so far as this symbol is concerned; for we are informed by an eminent authority that "our Masonic authors have not hesitated to write openly and in the plainest language of its signification," and that "the explanation is by no means, and has never been, regarded as esoteric." Possibly, however, this license was granted only

because investigation on restricted lines proved barren of any satisfactory result. The secret of the Sacred Symbol has been lost, and even free, open and voluminous investigation has signally failed to recover it. It has always appeared to me that preconcevied opinions have been permitted to obscure the light which otherwise might be shed on the search.

The Letter G and the Square

The clue to the origin and meaning of the Sacred Symbol appears to have been lost through the statement that it is represented by the letter G, which, in its geometrical and symmetrical form, is as unlike a square as it is possible for any figure to be. And yet the letter G and the square appear, from ancient lectures, to have been interchangeable terms. "Why did you get to be received as a Fellowcraft?" was formerly one of the questions, to which the answer is, "On account of the letter G." A similar reply is given to question, "Why were you made a Fellowcraft?" The modern G now before our eyes is a Roman letter, but in the Middle Ages the Greek alphabet, with the derivatives, was more commonly used than the Latin in ecclesiastical writing. In these alphabets the letter G, like the Greek Gamma, still retained the shape of the perfect square.

The translation of the Gospels of Ulphilas is the oldest extant monument of Teutonic speech, and in that alphabet the shape of G is square; so it is also in one of the great dominant alphabets of the world, the Cyrillic. In the Codex Argenteus, written in the

Meso-Gothic Script, G is still a square, and went by the name of Gebo. Our medieval brethren would, therefore, be accustomed to see their secret symbol in the form of the letter ⌐ which was familiar to them, and it is but natural that they should use the letter as a gloss for the square, so as to denote, and at the same time conceal, that which it would have been improper to call by its real name before the uninitiated. The identity of the letter G and the square is further proved by the custom of placing a square or L on the vestments of the disciples in medieval paintings. These marks alone or in combination are called Gammadias, or squares, and the Swastika, composed of four squares, is called the Gammadion.

When, in course of time, the ungainly, club-footed Latin G took the place of the beautiful Greek Gamma, the identity of the letter with the Sacred Symbol was obscured. The letter G, detached from its bearings, was cast adrift, and as a derelict caused disaster to those who fell foul of it. Endless are the theories, and absurd many of the conjectures advanced by commentators, to account for the presence and meaning of the once self-evident, but now enigmatical letter. A glance at the obvious would have saved much of the ingenuity expended in exploiting the abstruse in search of an explanation. Formerly, the accepted view was that the symbol stood for the initial of the word Geometry, which was then regarded as equivalent to Masonry, but this explanation does not account for the sacred

nature of the symbol. The reverence accorded to it is due to none but the Grand Geometer.

It has, therefore, recently been held that the letter owes its sanctity to the fact that it is the initial of the word God. But it is only in two languages that this explanation could hold good. An attempt was then made to trace a resemblance to the Hebrew letter Yod, the first of the four letters forming the ineffable name of Jehovah. These far-fetched fancies culminated in the opinion expressed by a well-known authority that a solution is to be found in the initial of the first of the Hebrew words, Gomer, Oz, and Dabar, meaning Beauty, Strength, and Wisdom, and forming the word God. After this wonderful exposition, the attempt at explanation was abandoned, and the conclusion formed that "it is to be regretted that the letter G as a symbol was ever admitted into the Masonic system," and that the use of the letter tended to the belief that the present form of the Second Degree was of modern date. A desire was also expressed to get rid of the obnoxious character altogether. At the same time it was reluctantly admitted that it would be impossible to erase a symbol so deeply embedded in the substance of Masonry. An attempt, however, to eliminate it from English Masonry does appear to have been made, for it is absent from the jewels and clothing of Masons in England, although in almost every other country it is retained. It is fortunate that the iconoclasts met with but little success, otherwise an interesting page of

archaeology, as well as an instructive instance of the transmission of symbols, would have been lost to the Craft.

Early Evidences of the Use of the Letter G and the Square.

If further proof of the former identity of the letter G and the square were needed, it is to be found in the text of a ritual no longer in use among us. Therein it is recorded that in an attack on our Master a second blow was struck with a square across his breast, and that on exhumation a faint resemblance to the letter G marked on his left breast was discovered.

The term square is applied equally to the whole quadrangular figure or to any one of its right angles. Geometrically, it stands for the idea of four. Philo Judaeus remarks that four is the first square figure, and, like the square, the number four was held by the ancients to be an emblem of moral justice and equity, hence it was employed to express "the ineffable name of an inexpressible God."

The square, or Gamma, therefore, fitly visualized the four Hebrew characters forming the Tetragrammaton or quadriliteral name of Jehovah depicted in the Middle Chamber of the Temple by the letter G in its original form.

The cross, like the square, is composed of four right angles, but in the cross the angles are at the center and open, instead of being external and closed, as in the four-sided square. The cross is also a sign for four, and in many respects the symbolism of the

cross and the square is identical. Both are emblems of the earth, as is also that combination of the cross and square known as the fylfot, or swastika.

The square, as representing the earth, is brought into association by contrast with the circle, which is an emblem of Heaven. In China, temples dedicated to the earth are built four square, while those consecrated to Heaven are circular.

The Square and Circle

In symbolism, the square or cross is almost inseparable from the circle. Each is incomplete in itself, but finds its fulfillment when conjoined in meaning with the other, as is the case of the two pillars at the entrance of the Temple, which also respectively represent Heaven and earth. The crux ansata, or ankh, of Egypt, is a cross or tau surmounted by a circle. This was adopted in a modified form by Christianity as the Cho Rho or Labarum. The orb of empire is the ankh inverted. Most of the planetary signs and many of the symbols of alchemy are variants of the same elements. Sometimes the circle encloses the cross, and sometimes it is placed at the central intersection of the lines.

The Cross and the Circle.

Many curious customs, religious rites and devices illustrate the conjunction of the cross and circle. The hot cross bun and the Easter egg may be recalled in this connection, also the cross and crown. Gerald Massey describes a custom which formerly obtained in Yorkshire of cutting the

bride cake at weddings into small squares and passing them through the wedding ring; the association of four with the circle also explains the practice of placing the ring on the fourth finger of the bride. Previous to the fifteenth century the shape of the number four was a loop, the upper half of 8, but after that period it assumed the square form of 4.

The game of noughts and crosses which we played as children is perhaps an instance of the recapitulation of the stages of evolution through which mankind has passed, these successive stages being, at least so educationists inform us, as clearly marked in the sports of childhood and in nursery rhymes as they are in the physical development of the embryo. Innumerable other instances of the conjunction of cross and circle, as occurring in the symbols used at all times and everywhere by all races of men, might be cited.

Wherever they occur, the underlying meaning is the same. They are tokens of the reconciliation of the at-one-ment of correlative forces, entities, or ideas, such as spirit and matter, theory and practice, absolute and relative, which, though apparently opposed, are in reality each necessary as the complement of the other. In their reunion lies the secret not only of Masonry, but of all religions and philosophies, typified ever since the days of Ancient Babylon by the blending together of the symbols of Heaven and earth, and alluded to as the divine marriage of Ouramos and Ge.

Conclusion

To sum up we do not favor changing the English "G" to either the Hebrew "Yod" or the Greek "Gamma," for while the "Yod" is the Hebrew symbol of J H V H it does not have the Masonic significance of the Greek "Γ" which to "our ancient friend and brother, the great Pythagoras" also represented the Ineffable Name. Neither does it, like Γ, the Gamma, represent the square, one of the working tools of a Mason. The letter G is the English form of the Greek "Γ" and stands for the same thing. While it does not have a geometrical form, it, like its Greek form, is the initial of both God and Geometry, and as such is more easily recognized by the Candidate, who can later trace its inner meaning as we have outlined above. We must remember that the central theme of Masonry is the Lost Word, or hidden name of God, and to make the symbol so evident that it needs little or no study to grasp its full meaning would divest it of its hidden character, and cause it to lose the full force of its symbolism as a lost word.

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